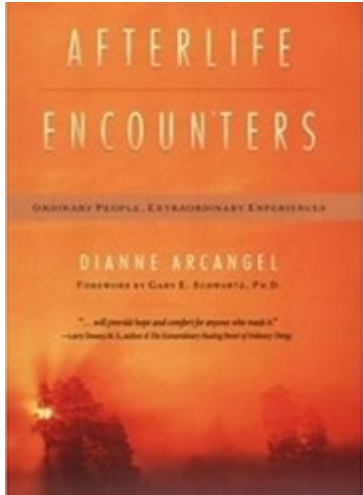
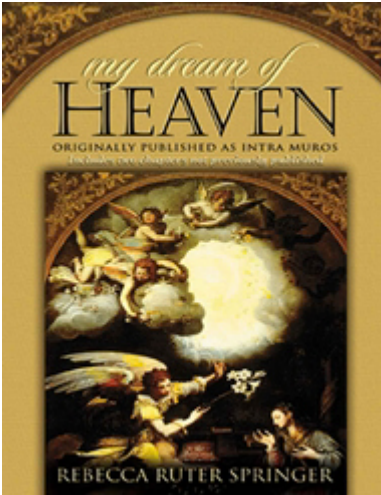


Christians Who 'Communicate' with Departed Loved Ones are Defying God's Word

by Jeremy James

	
<p><i>Afterlife Encounters: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Experiences</i> by Dianne Arcangel</p>	<p><i>My Dream of Heaven</i> [formerly <i>Intra Muros</i>] by Rebecca Ruter Springer</p>

When I was in the New Age, I learned that there are some people who will believe almost anything. The number is relatively small. However, there is another, more discerning class of people, who will believe something only if it is presented to them in the right way. Once that condition has been satisfied, then they too can be induced to believe almost anything. The New Age movement, which is controlled by the Enemy, is highly proficient at presenting ancient lies in a new and modern form so that this "more discerning class of people" will accept them. And it is having enormous success.

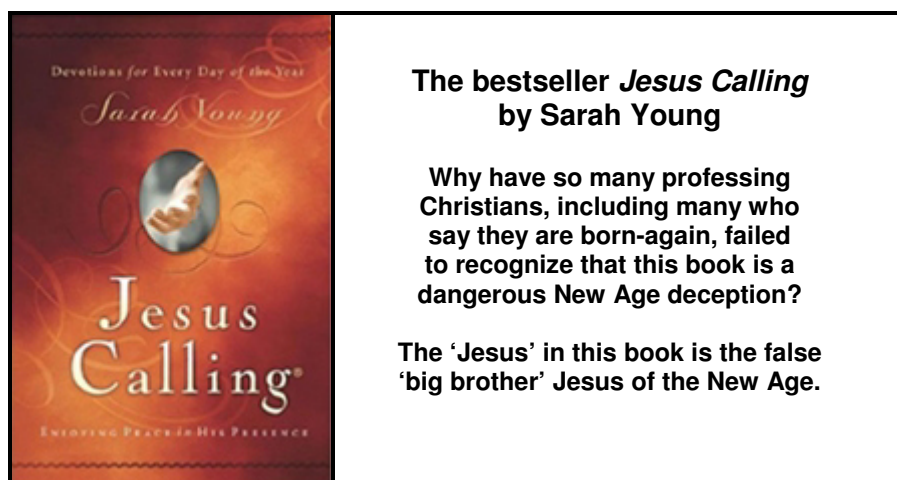
Having been in the New Age movement for 33 years and swallowed most of its lies, I was truly astonished to discover, after I came to Christ in 2008, that a great many professing Christians were adopting elements of the teachings that I had just left behind! What was going on?

Satan is forming his great End Time church, the false version of Christianity that will usher in the Antichrist. The New Age Movement is a major part of this plan. Through it he is selling gnosticism, mysticism and magic in the guise of a new or reformed version of 'Christianity'.

For example, most professing Christians would never attend a talk on Reiki, a Buddhist healing system for transferring so-called universal energy or *chi* through the hands of a trained and initiated practitioner. So the Enemy creates a false form of Christianity, in this instance the Purpose-Driven Church, and uses it as a vehicle for introducing professing Christians to Reiki. In this way, when mega-church pastor Rick Warren introduces a 'Health Plan' and endorses Dr Mehmet Oz, who teaches Reiki, he can indoctrinate thousands of people into one aspect of the New Age. These naïve Christians will sit obligingly and absorb pagan ideas from a pagan teacher, all the while pretending to themselves that what they are hearing is Biblical.

The new church movements of today – the Purpose-Driven Church, the Emerging Church, Word-Faith, the New Apostolic Reformation, etc – are primarily vehicles for introducing undiscerning Christians to New Age ideas. This approach had some success in the 19th century via Mormonism, Christian Science and Seventh Day Adventism, but it has been greatly expanded, to the point where it has now breached the walls of traditional evangelical Christianity. Today a tide of pagan ideas and practices are pouring into the church and subverting tens of millions of professing believers.

Consider, for example, the sales of 'Jesus Calling' by Sarah Young, which probably exceed 10 million. In a few short years, countless 'good' Christians have read this book and said, Hey this is inspiring! But how many recognized it as a blasphemous mockery of true Christianity? How many discerned the occult poison woven sweetly into every page? How many said, Stop! This is pure garbage!?



Purpose of the New Age program

The main purpose of this New Age program is to dilute the gospel to the point where it has no effect. But it has another, no less sinister objective, namely to get believers to open themselves to the supernatural. For example, the New Apostolic Reformation, through its practice of "spiritual warfare", is actively urging its members to interact with the supernatural realm. Or consider the Emerging Church, which teaches its members to practice "visualization" or "contemplative prayer". This is nothing other than Eastern mysticism in a westernized form, the purpose of which is to render the practitioner more receptive to supernatural impressions.

Another disturbing variation of this New Age trend is the practice of Christian necromancy, where believers strive to communicate with, or experience the presence of, departed loved ones. Since the word 'necromancy' is deeply offensive to Christian ears – as it should be – we will use another term for purposes of this review. The term we have chosen is "Unveiling" since, as we shall shortly see, Christians who are involved in this practice are seeking to pull back the so-called "veil" between this world and the next and glimpse, if only for a few moments, the presence or sign of a departed loved one.

Before proceeding with our review of "Unveiling" and its alleged doctrinal basis, the sensitivity of this entire matter must be considered. Anyone who seeks to contact a departed loved one is very likely mourning their absence and yearning to have them back here on earth again. Grief over the death of a child or a young adult is certainly one of the most agonizing experiences we can have. For many, it can last for years, burning painfully inside them and casting a shadow over everything they do. So, in discussing this issue, we need to keep in mind the anguish and inner torment of those who have suffered the loss of a child.



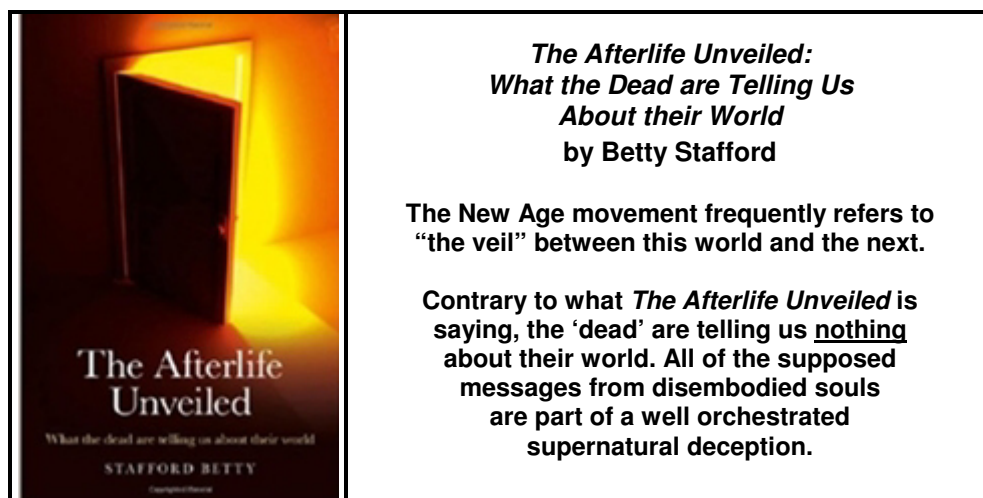
We have no doubt that the authors of the book we are about to discuss – Steve and Sarah Berger – acted only out of a genuine desire to share what seemed to them a truly blessed way of coping with grief. Thus, in subjecting their claims to Biblical scrutiny, we are seeking only to establish whether or not they are doctrinally valid. We have no desire to intrude on the intimacy of their personal experiences or to question in any way their integrity or commitment as Bible-believing Christians.

Bridging the gulf between Heaven and Earth

In 2010 the Bergers published a book entitled *Have Heart: Bridging the Gulf between Heaven and Earth* in which they described the trauma of losing their beloved son, Josiah, in an auto accident at age 19 and their experiences in the months thereafter as they, along with other family members and their inner circle of friends, received 'communications' from him in seemingly miraculous ways.

- The first 'contact' came through a Muslim friend of the Bergers who related to them an unusually vivid and emotionally charged dream in which he met Josiah and "a Man in a robe." Josiah was being taught how to fish by the Man. This dream report greatly affected the Bergers and they concluded that "Josiah is participating in the "catching" of unbelievers for Jesus Christ." (p.87)
- Later, Josiah's ninth-grade English teacher reported a dream in which he saw Josiah's spirit in Thailand, stating "...I remember hearing Josiah's spirit saying that he was in Thailand because that is where he was needed." (p.90)
- The executive pastor of their church related an experience where, during a prayer and worship service, "Josiah came into the sanctuary", went across to him and spoke in his ear. (p.99)
- Sarah described an episode where Josiah ["Siah"] spoke to her in her spirit. As she said, "We can't really explain it, but it was so quick and so random, I just knew it was Siah." (p.103)
- Steve also recounted an incident where he went to a local pond and saw a visiting bird, a huge white crane, something that was virtually unknown in those parts: "Unusual on any day, but incredibly unusual during a season like this." What is more, it remained in the same place for some time and allowed Steve to come really close. He later learned that Josiah was studying a form of martial arts of the kung-fu variety, known as 'White Crane'. (p.118)

I have no particular comment on any of these experiences and their significance for Steve and Sarah or for anyone in their circle of friends. Problems begin, however, when we examine the interpretation that the Bergers themselves place on these and similar experiences.



The following statements give a flavor of what they believe and what they are earnestly trying to convey to Christians everywhere:

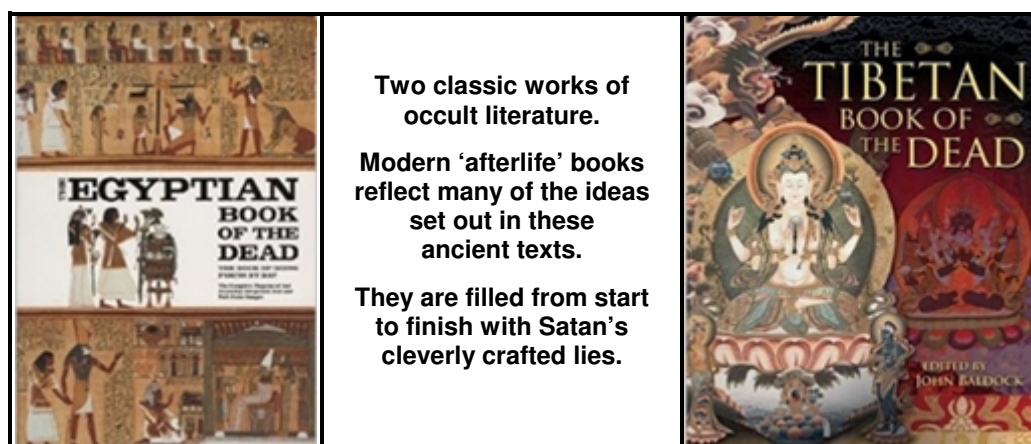
- "If God allows supernatural visitations in your life, thank Him for this precious gift!" (p.103)
- "... consider which one motivates you more: the thought of an Old Testament prophet in your corner or the thought of your precious loved one who knows you intimately and loves you completely. That's a no-brainer as far as we're concerned! We mean no disrespect to the prophets..." (p.107)
- "We are *one* body, connected here on earth, connected in Heaven, and connected between Heaven and earth. Our loved ones may show up in dreams or visits or other ways (who can limit God's imagination?), but the fact is that we're connected. Our loved ones are not "up there" and we are "down here." There is a thin veil, and we're connected to them, forever, in Christ." (p.110) [emphasis in original]

In short, the Bergers are teaching that our departed loved ones are still watching events here on earth, that they are engaged in missions to various parts of the world to help lead souls to Christ, and that from time to time they will enter our lives briefly through dreams and visions in order to 'contact' us and convey a word or sign of encouragement.

To anyone in the New Age, this is a very standard teaching. Just about everyone who believes in life after death – other than a born-again Bible-believing Christian – will find this acceptable. The Bergers believe that traditional born-again believers are wrong to reject this teaching and point to several passages from Scripture which, in their opinion, prove the matter beyond all doubt.

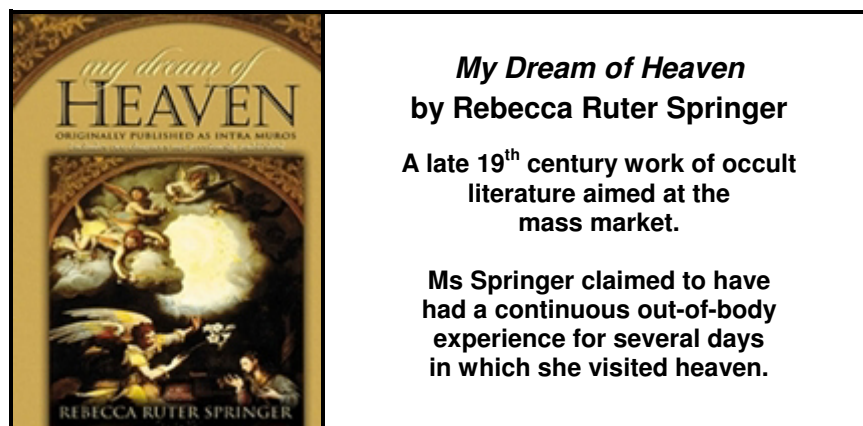
The New Age context of the Berger book

Before examining their suggested proof, we should step back a moment and note a few telling facts from their book which show that their understanding has been influenced in part by factors other than Scripture. The following admission, in particular, highlights a startling openness to supernatural speculation based on Theosophy and Spiritualism:



"Multiple times over the last fifteen years, we have read a very compelling book entitled *My Dream of Heaven* by Rebecca Ruter Springer. In this fascinating little book, Springer relates her vision of what Heaven is like and details the kinds of activities she witnessed there after she was transported to Heaven during an extended life-threatening illness. She was inspired to write the book after recovering from her near-death experience, and we found Billy Graham's endorsement to ring very true: "*My Dream of Heaven* ... captures Biblical truths with emotional impressions." One of the most emotional impressions the book left on us was Springer's idea that saints in Heaven go on "invisible missions" to earth." (p.89)

The "very compelling" book that they read "multiple times" over the previous 15 years was actually a detailed account of a dramatic and protracted out-of-body experience that Rebecca Ruter Springer claimed to have had over a hundred years ago. The book, now called *My Dream of Heaven*, was originally entitled 'Intra Muros', meaning *Between the Walls*.



Springer's book would be classified today as an afterlife narrative in the tradition of Swedenborg (d.1772) and 19th century Spiritualism. Like its predecessors, it is full of the imagery and sentiments that characterize a trip to the "Astral Plane." Even though she expresses some vaguely Christian opinions here and there, the book is flagrantly occult. It has all of the ingredients that feature in such works – beautiful rivers, rosy skies, radiant flowers, stately mansions, a stunningly beautiful Temple, woodland walks, glorious music, frequent rapturous meetings with relatives who passed over, and even joyous reunions with beloved pets. [See **Appendix A** for an overview of Ms Springer's book.]

A Christian who comes across a book like this for the first time will likely think, 'Wow! This is incredible! Why were we not told about this?' Well, the answer ought to be obvious. It is all part of the great occult deception that Satan has prepared to beguile and confuse all who depart from the strict teaching of God's Holy Word.

In a sense these books are fairy tales for adults, and exercise the same fascination over the mind and imagination of an adult that similar magical tales exert on the sensibilities of a child. The Enemy has long used fantasy, myth and imagination to confuse mankind, to weave truths, half truths and lies together in ways that draw the unwary further and further from God!

Ms Springer was not lying. Her "experience" did occur, but it was infused into her mind during a bout of severe illness. A stage hypnotist does much the same with waking subjects when he gets them to believe impossible things. Hypnotism is demonic, but the scenes it generates are overpoweringly real to the subject. The many near-death and out-of-body experiences reported by Dr Raymond Moody and others are in the same category. So too are the mystical experiences and ecstatic states reported by contemplative monks and nuns.

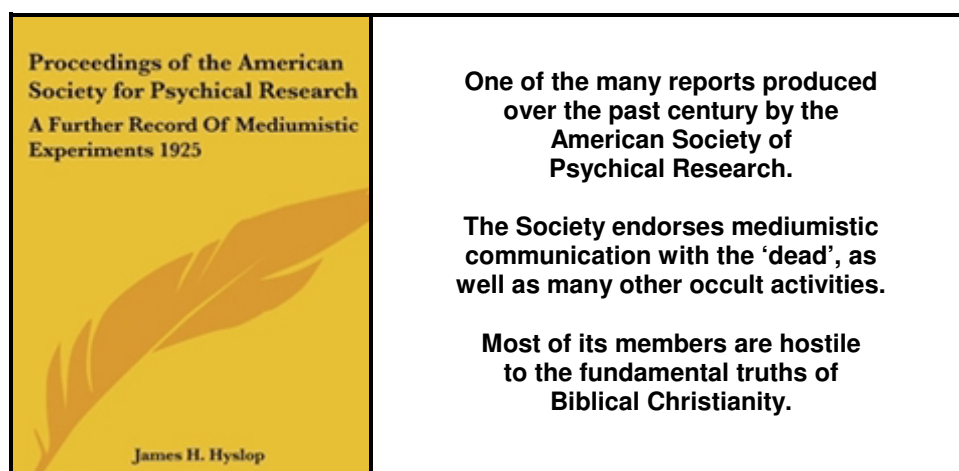
An army of supernatural deceivers

Satan and his huge army of fallen angels have the ability to affect our minds if we allow them. They can infuse images and ideas, thoughts and impressions, false memories, intense emotional states, and other cognitive phenomena to create extremely convincing supernatural experiences. These can be exhilarating, immensely reassuring, and profoundly moving, but they have only one purpose – to deceive!

Satan will do whatever it takes to ensnare vulnerable souls and lead them to destruction. He may use fear to *drive* his victims to the edge, or he may use sugar-candy and tasty treats to *lure* them to the edge. Either way, he gets the outcome he wants. Ms Springer's book and others like it are high-grade candy.

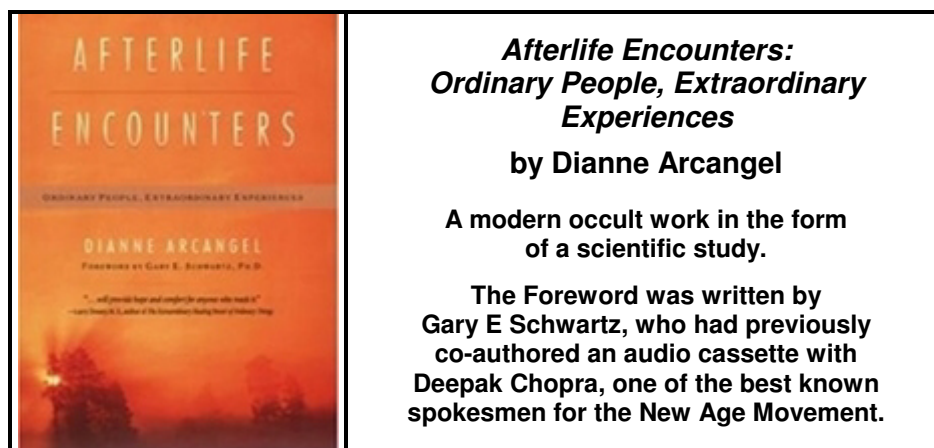
It is not our purpose here to examine the reasons why some people open themselves to these kinds of experience, but as more and more people depart from Biblical truth the number of new books recounting a profound mystical journey or glorious visit to heaven will increase dramatically in the years ahead.

Christian leaders seem to be oblivious to the threat. In fact, many encourage their flocks to read this kind of material. We have seen how Billy Graham actually endorsed the Springer book! (Since Rev. Graham is a Freemason, a close friend of the Papacy, and a major player in the Roman Catholic ecumenical movement, we should not be too surprised.)



Another book endorsed by the Bergers (with some reservations) is *Afterlife Encounters: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Experiences* by Dianne Arcangel. The book was based on a 5-year study called "The Afterlife Encounter Survey." They state, "Many of her clients believe they have had tangible experiences with their loved ones, such as dreams or symbols or sounds, and some of the experiences have been confirmed by more than one person."

Readers of the Berger book may not realize that Ms Arcangel is part of the New Age movement. The Foreword to her book was written by Gary E Schwartz, who co-produced a commercial audiocassette with Deepak Chopra in 2001. Chopra, a Hindu, is one of the best known exponents of New Age philosophy and greatly admired by millions of Neo-pagans around the world. In her acknowledgements Arcangel writes: "Throughout my professional and personal life, Rhea White, editor of the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (JASPR), has contributed her support, enthusiasm and resources."



Chopra, afterlife experiments, psychical research, symbols and sounds from a higher plane? This is all New Age mysticism! In the 19th century it was called Theosophy, New Thought and Spiritualism. Today it has been repackaged as "New Age," but it is the same pagan doctrine that the Enemy has taught for thousands of years.

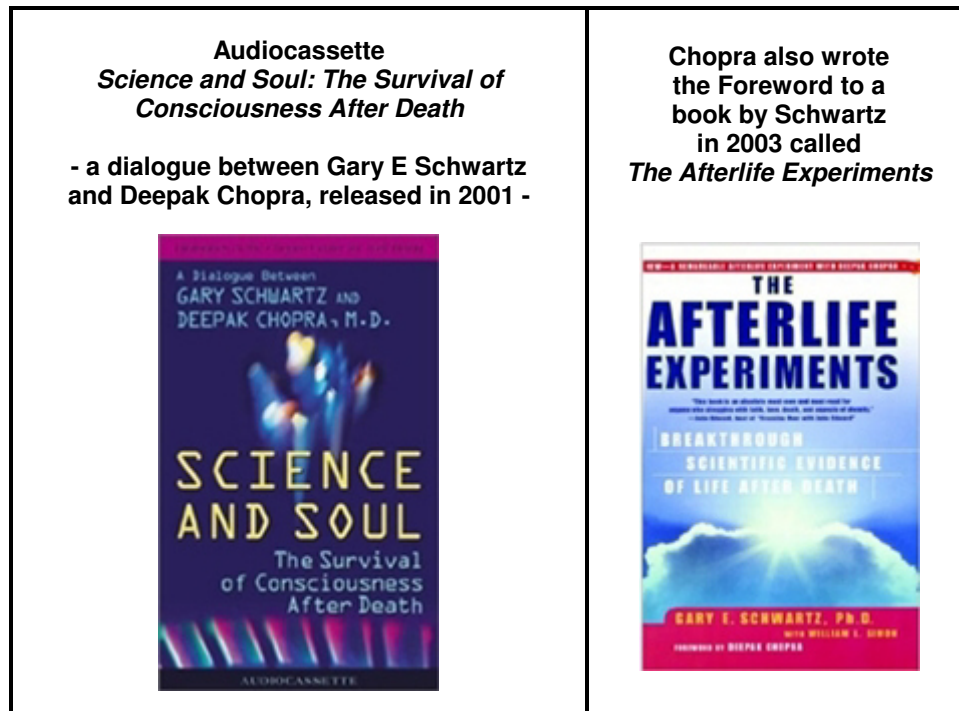
If you are a Christian and this does not disturb you, then you are probably already infected, at least to some degree, by the false teachings of the New Age. How else can I put it? Springer and Arcangel are teaching a false religious doctrine. They are not promoting something that is good in part – as the Bergers seem to believe – but something that is wholly and utterly in conflict with Biblical truth.

The alleged Biblical proof

Let's examine the Biblical texts which the Bergers claim are consistent with these beliefs. Early in the book they make a very revealing statement:

"We must cling to the fact that Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted. He didn't just come to cheer us up on a sad day. He came so that He could show us power and healing when our hearts are in little pieces and scattered all over the place. He came so we could literally "have heart"! He came for THAT...This is good news: Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted! Please don't look at this as just a nice greeting card sentiment. It's not sentimental – it's supernatural." (pps. 26 & 30)

This is not scripturally correct. It portrays, not the Christ of the Bible, but the 'Christ' of the New Age "big brother" Christ who wants everyone to be happy and is extremely loath to judge or chasten anyone. In fact, three of the people who provided a written endorsement for their book – William Paul Young (author of *The Shack*), Greg Laurie and James Robison – all teach the "big brother" New Age Christ.



– Isaiah

The Bergers quote Isaiah 6:1-4

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke."

They take this to mean that Isaiah was so grief-stricken by the death of King Uzziah that he began to meditate deeply on death and the afterlife and thereby prepared himself for a special heavenly experience. They assert: "Sometimes it takes the passing of a loved one for us to clearly see heavenly things...The passing of King Uzziah triggered a bigger event. It gave Isaiah answers and a vision of Heaven." (p.46)

Their interpretation is completely incorrect. Isaiah dated his prophecy by reference to the year in which the king died. That was its only purpose. It is ridiculous to assert that his death "triggered a bigger event." It was a common practice in both the Old and the New Testaments to date an event by reference to the reign or death of a king or other notable political figure. It is simply irrational to impute a causal connection where none exists.

– glorification

Their next error is to confuse the pre-resurrected state of a departed soul with the glorified body that he or she will enjoy after the resurrection. They cite Scripture consistently in this regard in the first half of the book but later, in the heat of battle as it were, they start to ascribe properties to the departed that they cannot possibly possess until after the resurrection (or Rapture). "When you think about Christ's resurrected body, with all its unique abilities – including miraculously appearing ...instantly disappearing...and flying... – it's pretty exciting to think we'll have the same kind of body..." (p.64)

– Saul, Samuel, and the Transfiguration

Next they cite the appearance of Samuel to Saul at Endor and of Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration (including their discussion with Jesus about his impending trip to Jerusalem) as proof (a) that the departed know what's happening here on earth (at least some of the time) and (b) that they can return to earth to perform an assigned spiritual mission.

Anticipating the charge of necromancy, they hastily add:

"Now, let's say right up front we're not talking about channeling, séances, or mediums trying to contact the dead ... Deuteronomy 18:10 forbids seeking those types of encounters ... We need to understand that God has the power to temporarily lift the veil between Heaven and earth at any time according to His good pleasure." (p.95)

In their view, this 'unveiling' is not to be confused with 'channeling'. The former is an act of God, they argue, while the latter is plainly a sinful endeavour. But the Biblical episodes that they cite do not permit one to draw this conclusion. Saul sinned grievously when he sought an audience with Samuel, while the Transfiguration was an astonishing, one-of-a-kind event that cannot possibly have application to all believers. Moses and Elijah were present, not to serve man, but to bear witness to Christ! They were sent by the Father to the Son. The Word does not tell us the specific purpose behind their visit, but it is clear that it pertained to Christ only and not to man.

– the book of Revelation

The Bergers also cite the instance in the book of Revelation where the departed saints cry out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10). They argue from this that the departed saints know what is happening on earth, that they are emotionally involved, and that they can plead with God to intervene in earthly affairs.

There is a major problem with this interpretation. This event takes place during the Tribulation and after the Rapture/Resurrection. It therefore reflects a situation that does not obtain today and cannot be used to support the claims made by the Bergers. It could not be used in any event to support their main claim, namely that departed saints can occasionally visit earth to carry out supernatural missionary work.

– Hebrews 12

Perhaps their most serious misuse of Scripture relates to the "cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 12:

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us... But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect"

– Hebrews 12:1 & 22-23

Here is how they interpret this passage:

"The writer of the Book of Hebrews went to great lengths to describe how close our loved ones are: we are *surrounded* by a great cloud of heavenly inhabitants! ... We're surrounded. It literally means that the saints are lying down all around us. There are so many it's innumerable. They are spectators, and they are all around us." (p.106) [emphasis in original]

The "witnesses" are actually the persons listed in the previous chapter of Hebrews, the well known "hall of faith" chapter. They are not witnesses in the sense of "spectators" but in the sense of persons who testify or bear witness (which is the usual meaning of this term in the New Testament). The various prophets and other persons cited by the author of Hebrews, along with the multitude of Old Testament believers, bear witness to our salvation by faith. The word "cloud" suggests both their great number and their exalted state. However, the author is not suggesting that these departed souls are actually watching us or participating in any sense in our daily affairs.



The Shack

by William Paul Young

This is one of the most occult 'Christian' books ever written. It includes a blasphemous portrayal of God the Father in the form of a goddess. The Holy Spirit too is depicted as a goddess, while "divine wisdom" is actually personified, also as a goddess. Thus the Trinity is mockingly portrayed and even increased in number to a Quaternity.

The book abounds in New Age concepts and presents a blatantly pantheistic worldview.

Disturbingly, the Bergers' book includes an endorsement by the author of *The Shack*.

Our only supernatural "spectators" are the angels, both elect and fallen. There is no suggestion anywhere in Scripture that departed souls are observing us or making occasional visits to see how we are faring. For example, when his infant son by Bathsheba died, David – who was stricken with grief – said, "...can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." (2 Samuel 12:23)

Christ told his disciples before he ascended into heaven that he would send them "another Comforter." He was referring to the Holy Spirit. He was not referring to a cloud of witnesses who would hover around us, the knowledge of whose presence would comfort us. No, we have but one Comforter, a truly wonderful and perfect Comforter! And through Him we have access to Christ and our heavenly Father. Nothing else is needed.

The Manifest Sons of God

Though they may not be aware of it, the Bergers' view of death and the afterlife is very similar to that of the Manifest Sons of God, whose intensely Charismatic teaching is littered with heresy. One of its leaders, Earl Paulk, taught the false "cloud of witnesses" doctrine. He also cited the same passages from Scripture to justify his practice of talking to his departed sister, Joan Harris (whom he greatly missed). In his examination of Paulk and the Manifest Sons of God, Al Dager made the following observation:

"How we all miss our loved ones. And how much we would love to speak to them after they've gone on. But actively seeking or even desiring such communication by any means leaves one open for contact by familiar spirits – demons impersonating the deceased. This is expressly forbidden in God's Word (Leviticus 19:31, 20:6-27; Deuteronomy 18:11; 1 Samuel 28:3; etc.)." - *Vengeance Is Ours*, p109

Not a gulf but a "veil"

The New Age movement teaches that departed souls can enter our homes and may even seek to communicate with us. This is possible, they believe, because the separation between the two worlds is supposedly no more substantial than a "veil." New Agers also attach great importance to communication with angels. However, the Bible forbids any attempt at communication of this kind. It even forbids any attempt to communicate with the elect or righteous angels. We have only ONE intercessor and that is Christ Jesus.

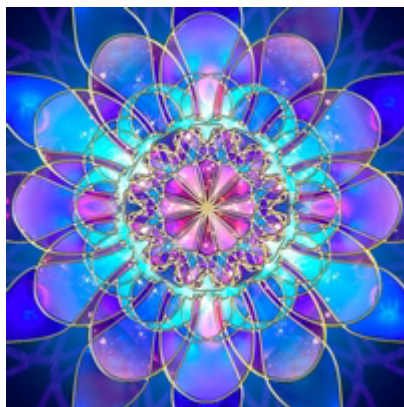
It is a great mistake to go beyond the straightforward teaching of Scripture and try to import ideas which do not fit the context and even conflict with plain doctrinal statements made elsewhere in Scripture. The Bible clearly condemns communication of any kind with "familiar spirits" and never draws a distinction between those which are benign and those which are not. There is no escaping the fact that a departed soul who lingered in our vicinity, if this were possible, would constitute a "familiar spirit." We are forbidden therefore to do what the Bergers are suggesting and seek contact in any way with a departed soul.

As we have already noted, the Bergers try to wriggle out of this by claiming that signs and tokens of the presence of the departed soul are Biblically acceptable if they are not sought after. Here is how they put it:

"Yes, the residents of Heaven are personally present, they are aware, and they are near! ... It's important to note that these special encounters are spontaneous, not sought after ... There was no go-between to make it happen ... As we said earlier, we're not talking about mediums or séances ... It's the spontaneity ... that makes the difference from condemned by God to orchestrated by God." (p.102)

This is actually disingenuous. Anyone who believes the "veil" theory has moved away from the plain Word of God and accepted an extra-Biblical method of obtaining divine favor. They cannot excuse themselves by claiming that they did not use a "go-between," as the Bergers put it. The signs and tokens are not "spontaneous" if we have *already* expressed a willingness to receive them! For example, when one reads an occult book "multiple times" – and Springer's *My Dream of Heaven* is occult – one has already crossed the line.

The New Age orientation of their thought is also reflected in the way the Bergers describe their experiences. For example, the New Age movement rejects the strict Biblical divide between this world and the next. In accordance with the ancient occult principle, 'As above, so below,' Neo-pagans view heaven and earth as interconnected realities. Quoting another author, the Bergers say, "*death is not an end but merely a transition to a new state of life.*" This is straight out of the New Age and ancient occult philosophy, where death is dismissed as nothing more than a shift – through "the veil" – from one dimension to another.



**New Age fractal
representation of reality**

The Great 'New Age' Lie

**In line with ancient occult philosophy,
the New Age teaches that everything
is connected in the great circle of life.**

Heaven and earth are One.

God and man are One.

Life and death are One.

**This is a dark Satanic lie, undermining
or rejecting virtually all the main
doctrines of Biblical truth.**

All is One according to the Occult

In the occult, all is one and everything is connected. Therefore no-one actually dies. The Bergers are expressing exactly this idea when they say:

"We are *one* body, connected here on earth, connected in Heaven, and connected between Heaven and earth. Our loved ones may show up in dreams or visits or other ways (who can limit God's imagination?), but the fact is that we're connected." (p.110) [emphasis in original]

Elsewhere they say:

"The fact that the veil is thin between our loved ones and us shouldn't shock us...we're all eternally connected on both sides of the veil." (p.108)

A Theosophist, a Hindu guru, a New Age neo-pagan, and a spirit medium would all agree wholeheartedly with these statements. So too would Ms Arcangel and Ms Springer, Gary Schwartz and Deepak Chopra. An ever-growing proportion of professing Christians would also agree. And yet these statements are completely false! They contradict some of the most fundamental doctrines of God's Holy Word and render void or superfluous the suffering and death of Christ on Calvary.

If everything is connected, then there is no death. And if death is not the consequence of sin, then sin is of little consequence. All is relative. We can never be separated from God because everything is connected. And if everything is connected then we too are part of God and He is part of us.

All of this must be immensely pleasing to the Great Deceiver, but he doesn't stop there. He takes matters a step further and presents a counterfeit version of heaven, and even a counterfeit version of hell. For example, Emmanuel Swedenborg (d.1772), whose writings were widely influential, gave graphic descriptions of his supposed journeys to both heaven and hell. So too did some of the Roman Catholic mystics. The Fatima visionaries, who were only children at the time, were given a terrifying vision of hell by the Virgin Mary (a fallen angel in disguise). This is how the Enemy indoctrinates mankind. A well-known modern account of a visit to hell – ***23 Minutes in Hell*** by Bill Wiese – is a product of the same supernatural deception.

These people undoubtedly gave a sincere report of what they experienced, but that does not mean their interpretation of the experience was correct. A person on LSD can take a terrifying 'trip' but his experience – or specifically his interpretation of it – tells us nothing about the next world. Mystics, visionaries, and individuals who undergo an 'out-of-body' experience are all taking a similar 'trip' but without the aid of LSD. Some seek it, and some do not – such as the Fatima visionaries or Bill Wiese. However, regardless of the factors that bring it about, it is still a 'trip' and of no value whatever in confirming, modifying or enlarging upon anything found in Scripture.

If nothing else, the Enemy is causing confusion through these deceptions. Some of the accounts were truly dramatic and had a powerful emotional impact on the subject. But they should never be trusted. In practice, even where Christians are reluctant to believe them, the Enemy scores a small victory by raising doubts in their minds and reinforcing the idea that the wall of separation between this world and the next is only a “veil.” And if it is only a “veil” then there is always the possibility that someday someone will figure out how to remove it. Contemplative spirituality, based on the writings of the Roman Catholic mystics, actually claims to have done so, provided the practitioner is prepared to undergo the necessary preparatory disciplines.

Our task as Bible-based believers

True believers must reject these lies with a passion! They must warn their fellow believers to watch earnestly for these lies and expose them, loudly and without restraint, the moment they infiltrate their church. They must denounce the false teachings of the New Age and condemn the many pseudo-Christian books that are poisoning the minds of professing Christians all over the globe.

This task is both urgent and challenging. Professing Christians who have begun to believe the lies of the New Age will likely resist any attempt to expose these false ideas. After all, the lies gained a foothold in the first place because of their strong appeal to our fallen, sinful nature. They have also been marketed with the message that the Bible has been misinterpreted by narrow-minded fundamentalists who only want to control the church and keep its members in subjection.

This attitude even came to the surface at one point in the Bergers' book:

"I (Steve) believe satanic attack has so infiltrated the church that there are even some believers today who want to minimize Heaven's unlimited glory ... If the Enemy can't get us to *not* believe in heaven at all, his next best desire is for us to believe in a minimized, predictable, boring Heaven. And we refuse!" (p.108) [emphasis in original]



William Paul Young
Author of *The Shack*



Deepak Chopra
New Age author

The message is clear: Those who stick to the traditional evangelical interpretation of the Bible have had their minds darkened by "satanic attack." They want to minimize the glory of heaven and hide its true beauty from other believers. (Presumably our paper falls into this category.)

The truth is that the New Age view of heaven in books like *My Dream of Heaven* by Rebecca Ruter Springer is a dreadful perversion of what God has prepared for those who love him. The extracts in **Appendix A** give a flavor of the imaginary place that Ms Springer believed she had visited. While it seemed real to her in her altered state of consciousness, it was nothing more than an elaborate mental construct designed by Satan to deceive and mislead his victim. He chose well, since Ms Springer then recorded her experience in writing and gave it to the world where, for over a hundred years, it has continued to deceive and mislead many others.

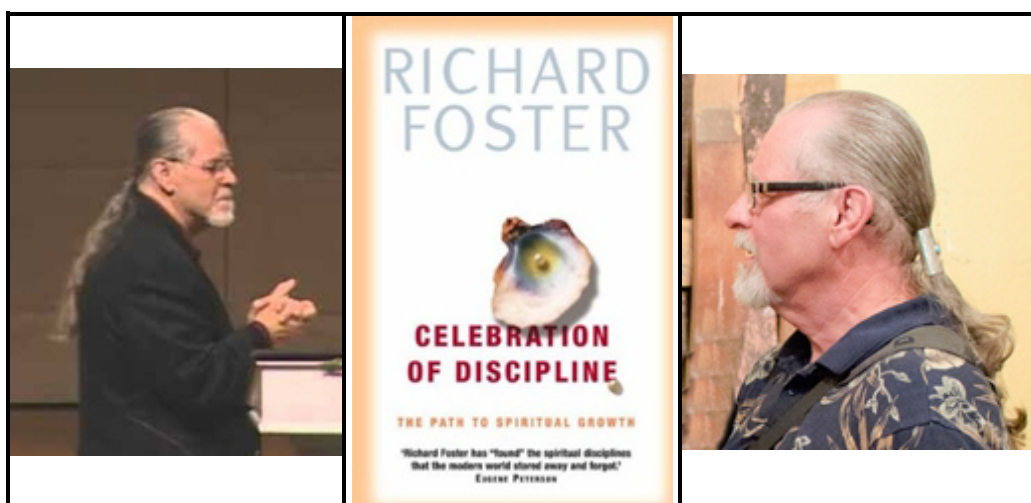
Even if one has difficulty dismissing her experience as an infernal fabrication, the matter is settled once and for all in God's Holy Word. Here is what the LORD tells us in Isaiah:

"For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." (Isaiah 64:4)

In the New Testament, Paul expands upon this truth as follows:

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

Non-believers have no idea what God has prepared for those who love Him! The truth of the next world is revealed only to those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. New Agers, mystics, Theosophists, and all the rest have only the counterfeit depiction of heaven (and hell) manufactured by Satan.



Furthermore, there is nothing in God's Word to suggest that whatever the Holy Spirit reveals to the believer about heaven can be communicated to someone else. It is the Holy Spirit alone who reveals it. Therefore Christians who claim to have had an experience of heaven and who try to convey it to others in words and images are acting contrary to God's Holy Word.

Christians would benefit greatly if they took any 'afterlife' books that they have in their home and threw them in the trash can. Such works are confusing, misleading and blasphemous. This includes the writings of Roman Catholic mystics like Teresa of Avila and Henri Nouwen, which are strongly promoted by the Emerging Church and the New Apostolic Reformation. Works like *A Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster have done immense harm to millions of professing believers. His subversive bestseller is nothing more than a celebration of Roman Catholic mysticism, the chief purpose of which is to enable the individual to hear Satan's lies more clearly.

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord – that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."

– James 5:7-11

We would urge the Bergers to withdraw their book from public circulation. Though apparently written with the best of intentions, it is seriously misleading and liable to cause real spiritual harm to any Christian who is foolish enough to heed their advice.

Jeremy James
Ireland
November 14, 2013

Overview of *My Dream of Heaven*

This Appendix sets out a brief overview of the book, *My Dream of Heaven*, by Rebecca Ruter Springer.

She is taken one morning from her body by her departed brother-in-law

"One morning, dark and cold and stormy, after a day and night of intense suffering, I seemed to be standing on the floor by the bed, in front of the stained-glass window. Someone was standing by me, and, when I looked up, I saw it was my husband's favorite brother... "

She gladly went with her spirit guide

"My brother drew me gently, and I yielded, passing with him through the window, out on the veranda, and from thence, in some unaccountable way, down to the street."

She finds that heaven is like earth, only better

"...the next I knew, I was sitting in a sheltered nook, made by flowering shrubs, upon the softest and most beautiful turf of grass, thickly studded with fragrant flowers, many of them the flowers I had known and loved on earth...in that first moment I observed how perfect in its way was every plant and flower."

She lived like someone who had entered a great country estate

"Look where I would, I saw, half hidden by the trees, elegant and beautiful houses of strangely attractive architecture, that I felt must be the homes of the happy inhabitants of this enchanted place. I caught glimpses of sparkling fountains in many directions, and close to my retreat flowed a river, with placid breast and water clear as crystal...The air was soft and balmy, though invigorating; and instead of sunlight there was a golden and rosy glory everywhere; something like the afterglow of a Southern sunset in midsummer."

Her home was exquisite

"...he took my hand and led me up the low steps on to the broad veranda, with its beautiful inlaid floor of rare and costly marbles, and its massive columns of gray, between which, vines covered with rich, glossy leaves of green were intermingled with flowers of exquisite color and delicate perfume hanging in heavy festoons. We paused a moment here, that I might see the charming view presented on every side."

Everyone was so happy...

"...And such a merry, happy company of young people, I never saw before. They laughed and chatted and sang, as they worked; and I could not help wishing more than once that the friends whom they had left mourning for them might look in upon this happy group, and see how little cause they had for sorrow."

The great minds from earth pursue their studies...

"...many of the rarest minds in the earth-life, upon entering on this higher life, gain such elevated and extended views of the subjects that have been with them lifelong studies, that, pursuing them with zest, they write out for the benefit of those less gifted, the higher, stronger views they have themselves acquired, thus remaining leaders and teachers in this rarer life, as they were while yet in the world."

Yet another perfect apartment

"The framework of the furniture was of ivory; the upholstering of chairs and ottomans of silver-gray cloth, with the finish of finest satin; and the pillows and covering of the dainty couch were of the same. A large bowl of wrought silver stood upon the table near the front window, filled with pink and yellow roses, whose fragrance filled the air; and several rarely graceful vases also were filled with roses. The entire apartment was beautiful beyond description; but I had seen it many times before I was fully able to comprehend its perfect completeness."

And the food was simply delicious

"It seemed to me at the time, and really proved to be so, that in variety and excellence, food for the most elegant repast was here provided without labor or care. My brother gathered some of the different varieties and bade me try them. I did so with much relish and refreshment."

Even her father's home was quite delightful

"Every room spoke of modest refinement and cultivated taste, and the home air about it was at once delightfully perceptible. My father's study was on the second floor, and the first thing I noticed on entering was the luxuriant branches and flowers of an old-fashioned hundred-leafed rose tree, that covered the window by his desk."

Her father introduces death-bed repentants to the joys of heaven

"Where do my father's duties mostly lie?" I asked my mother. "He is called usually to those who enter life with little preparation – that which on earth we call death-bed repentance. You know what wonderful success he always had in winning souls to Christ; and these poor spirits need to be taught from the very beginning. They enter the spirit-life in its lowest phase, and it is your father's pleasant duty to lead them upward step by step. He is devoted to his work and greatly beloved by those he thus helps. He often allows me to accompany him and labor with him, and that is such a pleasure to me!"

Yet another perfect home

"We soon reached it, and I was truly charmed with it in every way. It was fashioned much like my brother Nell's home, and was, like it, built of polished woods. It was only partly finished, and was most artistically done. Although uncompleted, I was struck with the fact that everything was perfect so far as finished."

Old friends from earth come calling

"As time passed, and I grew more accustomed to the heavenly life around me, I found its loveliness unfolded to me like the slow opening of a rare flower. Delightful surprises met me at every turn. Now a dear friend, from whom I had parted years ago in the earth-life, would come unexpectedly upon me with cordial greeting..."

A special trip to a beautiful park and lake

"I turned and looked, like one but half awakened. Before us spread a lake as smooth as glass, but flooded with a golden glory caught from the heavens, that made it like a sea of molten gold. The blossom- and fruit-bearing trees grew down to its very border in many places, and far, far away, across its shining waters, arose the domes and spires of what seemed to be a mighty city. Many people were resting upon its flowery banks, and on the surface of the water were boats of wonderful structure, filled with happy souls, and propelled by an unseen power. Little children, as well as grown persons, were floating upon or swimming in the water; and as we looked a band of singing cherubs, floating high overhead, drifted across the lake, their baby voices borne to us where we stood, in notes of joyful praise."

She finally gets to meet Jesus, who calls himself her 'Elder Brother'

"My Savior – my King!" I whispered, clinging closely to him. "Yes, and Elder Brother and Friend," he added, wiping away tenderly the tears stealing from beneath my closed eyelids. "Yes, yes, 'the chiefest among ten thousand, and the One altogether lovely!'" again I whispered."

And trips to the auditorium

"Not long after this my brother said, "We will go to the grand auditorium this morning; it will be a rare day even here. Martin Luther is to talk on 'The Reformation; Its Causes and Effects,' and this will be supplemented by a talk from John Wesley. There may also be other speakers.""

And more beautiful houses in beautiful gardens

"The framework of couches, chairs and desk was of pure and spotless pearl, upholstered in dim gold; soft rugs and draperies everywhere; and through the low window, opening upon the flower-wreathed balcony, so enchanting a view of the broad, smooth river below, that again I caught my breath in delight. A thousand exquisite tints from the heavens above were reflected upon the tranquil waters, and a boat floating on the current was perfectly mirrored in the opaline-tinted ripples. Far across the shining waters the celestial hills arose, with domes and pillared temples and sparkling fountains perceptible everywhere."

A trip to a celestial city, with stores and colleges, schools and factories

"The streets I found were all very broad and smooth, and paved with marble and precious stones of every kind. Though they were thronged with people intent on various duties, not an atom of debris, or even dust, was visible anywhere. There seemed to be vast business houses of many kinds, though I saw nothing resembling our large mercantile establishments. There were many colleges and schools; many book and music-stores and publishing houses; several large manufactories, where, I learned, were spun the fine silken threads of manifold colors which were so extensively used in the weaving of the draperies I have already mentioned. There were art rooms, picture galleries and libraries, and many lecture halls and vast auditoriums."

A concert in the park by a choir of angels

"We found in one place a very large park, with walks and drives and fountains and miniature lakes and shaded seats, but no dwellings or buildings of any kind, except an immense circular open temple capable of seating many hundred; and where, my brother told me, a seraph choir assembled at a certain hour daily and rendered the oratorios written by the great musical composers of earth and heaven."

A trip to God's Temple

"Upon the summit of this gentle slope a Temple stood, whose vast dome, massive pillars and solid walls were of unsullied pearl, and through whose great mullioned windows shone a white radiance that swallowed up the golden glow of the twilight and made it its own."

God came and went

"We knew that the visible glory of the Lord was, for the present, withdrawn from the Temple which is his throne; still we knelt with bowed heads in silent worship before him. When at last we arose I did not lift my eyes while within the Temple; I desired it to remain upon my memory as it appeared when filled with his glory."

Heaven is described as earth "without its imperfections"

"These happy surprises do not come by chance," he answered. "One of the delights of this rare life is that no occasion is ever overlooked for reproducing here the pure enjoyments of our mortal life. It is the Father's pleasure to make us realize that this existence is but a continuance of the former life, only without its imperfections and its cares."

Lots to do but with plenty of time for socializing

"The current of my life flowed on in the heavenly ways, until the months began to lengthen into years and my daily studies ascended higher in the scale of celestial mysteries. I never wearied of study, though much was taught and gained through the medium of observation in the journeys that I was permitted to take with my brother into different parts of the heavenly kingdom. I never lacked time for social pleasures and enjoyments, for there is no clashing of duties with inclination, no unfulfilled desires, no vain strivings for the unattainable in that life, as in the life of earth."

Her brother-in-law returns from a tiring mission to earth

"He looked as wearied as one can ever look in that life, but I felt no anxiety about him, for I knew the rest was sure. He had been absent on some earth-mission much of the time for many days, and I knew from experience that some of the fatigue and care of earth will cling to us on such occasions, till we are restored by heaven's balmy air and life-giving waters. He had not told me, as he sometimes did, where his mission had led him, and I had not asked him, feeling sure that all it was best I should know would be imparted."

At long last, a trip to the Great Celestial Sea

She is given directions to "the great celestial sea"

"You know the way. Through the forest that leads to the Temple, till almost there; then bear to the right and follow the golden path that takes you direct to the shore."

When she arrives she has an experience that surpasses her audience with the LORD in the Temple

"And the sea! It spread out before us in a radiance that passes description in any language I have ever known. It was like the white glory that shone through the windows of the Temple, and beneath this shining glory we caught in the roll of the waves the blue tint of the waters of that sea which has no limit to its depths or bounds. Upon its shining bosom we saw in every direction boats, representing all nations, but in beauty of construction far surpassing anything earth has ever known. They were like great open pleasure-barges, and were filled with people looking with eager faces toward the shore, many in their eagerness standing erect and gazing with wistful, expectant eyes into the faces of those upon the shore."

Closing remarks

We have here an account of heaven in the classic occult tradition, where a woman of culture and refinement visits the so-called Astral Plane and finds everything to her liking. She even gets to meet the 'Elder Brother' New Age Jesus. Later she receives an audience with the 'Lord' who was paying a short visit to his Temple. Best of all, she got to visit the Great Celestial Sea, which in New Age and occult philosophy is the real source of all life.

Ms Springer's book gives a false vision of heaven, a grotesque parody of what God has prepared for those who love Him.

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